



Labor and Public Employees Committee

HB 5356 An Act Concerning Pandemic Pay for Essential Workers

SB 321 An Act Expanding Workers' Compensation Coverage for Post-Traumatic Stress Injuries for All Employees

SB 318 An Act Concerning Captive Audience Meetings

HB 5353 An Act Concerning a Fair Work Week Schedule

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Kushner, Chairwoman Porter, ranking members, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Jody Barr and I serve as the Executive Director of AFSCME Council 4 which represents 30,000 public and private sector employees throughout Connecticut. I am here to today to testify in favor of several important bills for working families.

On behalf of the members of AFSCME Council 4, I am in strong support of HB 5356 which would provide a pandemic payment of \$2000 for full time workers and \$1000 for part time workers who were deemed essential during Covid-19. When the pandemic began it was all hands on deck and workers were suddenly deemed essential and thrown into a chaotic situation adjusting to a new normal.

As workers were adjusting to working during a pandemic they often had to do it without adequate PPE in the beginning. Even when the state procured enough safety supplies, workers had to provide services at great risk to themselves and their families. We saw many members of Council 4 – especially correction officers and administrative staff in congregate settings, as well as paraprofessionals, police officers, DPW workers, state DMV employees and many others – get Covid-19 because they had no **choice** but continue working.

Now is the time to provide compensation to these heroes for the work they did when others were fortunate enough to work from home. The state has a record rainy day fund with a surplus and should spend that money investing in workers who showed up and were essential to the our state functioning during challenging times.

I am also in support of SB 321 which would expand workers' compensation coverage for post-traumatic stress injuries for all employees. I want to thank the Labor committee for being a leader in supporting workers with PTSD.

Over the last 2 sessions, we have expanded PTSI coverage to include police officers, correction officers, dispatchers, and other public safety workers. This protection is long overdue and will help support all workers when they suffer from PTSI. AFSCME Council 4 strongly supports expanding workers' compensation to include PTSI for all workers.

Council 4 support SB 318 which would protect workers from captive audience meetings. Recent polls have shown support for labor unions at a near all-time high yet membership remains low which shows how laws are geared against workers. The decision to join a union free on intimidation or coercion should be a basic right afforded to workers.

However, when workers are subjected to mandatory meetings that misrepresent unions they are unable to leave or stand up for themselves without fear of reprisal. Passing SB 318 will help workers have an even playing field for organizing and determining if they would like to be in a union or not. I urge the committee to pass SB 318.

AFSCME Council 4 also support HB 5353 which would bring stability and predictability to workers schedules.

Thank you.